



US Media Contact:

Alyson O'Mahoney
+1 (914) 241-0086 ext. 13
aomahoney@robinleedyassociates.com

Foundation Contact:

Bernetia Akin
+1 (340) 775-4430
media@gruberprizes.org

Online Newsroom: www.gruberprizes.org/Press.php

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Charles Steidel receives \$500,000 Cosmology Prize, lectures on "Adolescent Universe"

Events prelude to Chandra Centennial Symposium

October 15, New York, NY - Amidst the celebrations for a 20th century icon in the world of astronomy, one of today's most important leaders will be honored with the prestigious 2010 Cosmology Prize.

Prof. Charles C. Steidel will accept the \$500,000 award from The Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation at the University of Chicago today. Known for his discovery of the most distant galaxies to date, Steidel is credited with revolutionizing the study of galactic evolution.

Fittingly, the award ceremony will take place against the backdrop of the university's weekend Chandrasekhar Centennial Symposium, a tribute to Nobel laureate S. Chandrasekhar (Chandra) on what would have been his 100th birthday. Originally from India, Chandra taught at the University of Chicago from 1937 until his death in 1995 (coincidentally the same year Steidel identified the earliest galaxies.) A world renowned astrophysicist, Chandra was lauded for his work in theoretical structure and the evolution of stars. Scientists from around the world have gathered in Chicago for the symposium.

Following the Cosmology Prize presentation, Steidel will deliver a public lecture aimed at a combination peer and lay audience on "Observations of Structure Formation in the Adolescent Universe." It is at 4 p.m. at the Assembly Hall of the university's International House.

"My main scientific interest is, and has been, how the galaxies got there," Steidel explained. How and when did they form, and has the process changed over time?

To answer these questions, astronomers need to observe galaxies at different stages of their development, over the course of billions of years. In the mid-1990s, using what was then the most powerful telescope on Earth, and implementing a method of measurement based on knowledge of the speed of light and more



subtle factors, Steidel and his colleagues were able to find evidence of “primordial galaxies” some 12 billion years ago – when the Universe was a mere 2 billion years old.

Like the universe itself, his work continues to evolve. Most recently, he has prepared a paper on a technique that uses multiple “skewers” of one-dimensional views through the universe to create a composite 3-D view of highly active galaxies spewing gas into space. He and his team have discovered that a galaxy can influence a region in space 100 times its own diameter.

Steidel joins an illustrious list of Cosmology Prize laureates: Wendy Freedman, Robert Kennicutt and Jeremy Mould, joint recipients in 2009; J. Richard Bond, 2008; Saul Perlmutter and Brian Schmidt and their teams in 2007; John Mather and the COBE Team in 2006; James E. Gunn, 2005; Alan Guth and Andrei Linde, 2004; Rashid Allevich Sunyaev, 2003; Vera Rubin, 2002; and Allan R. Sandage and Phillip J.E. Peebles for the inaugural Prize in 2000.

Prize recipients are chosen by an independent advisory board acting as the selection committee and sifting through nominations received from around the globe. Current members are: Jacqueline Bergeron, Institut d’Astrophysique – CNRS; Wendy Freedman, The Observatories of the Carnegie Institution of Washington; Peter Galison, Harvard University; Ronald Ekers, Australia Telescope National Facility – CSIRO; Andre Linde, Stanford University; Julio F. Navarro, University of Victoria; and Roger Penrose, University of Oxford. Owen Gingerich of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics and Virginia Trimble, University of California, Irvine, serve as non-voting advisors.

Additional Information

The Gruber International Prize Program honors contemporary individuals in the fields of Cosmology, Genetics, Neuroscience, Justice and Women’s Rights, whose groundbreaking work provides new models that inspire and enable fundamental shifts in knowledge and culture. The Selection Advisory Boards choose individuals whose contributions in their respective fields advance our knowledge, potentially have a profound impact on our lives, and, in the case of the Justice and Women’s Rights Prizes, demonstrate courage and commitment in the face of significant obstacles.

The Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation honors and encourages educational excellence, social justice and scientific achievements that better the human condition. For more information about Foundation guidelines and priorities, please visit www.gruberprizes.org

Affiliation with the International Astronomical Union

In 2000, The Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation and the International Astronomical Union announced an agreement by which the IAU provides its expertise and contacts with professional astronomers worldwide and nominates members to the Cosmology Prize Selection Advisory Board. Under the agreement, The Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation also funds a fellowship program for young astronomers, with the aim of promoting the continued recruitment of new talent into the field.
